

**Linda Clair**  
**Seven-day Meditation Retreat**  
**Kallara Conference Centre, Australia**  
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**Transcription from Audio Recordings**

**File 3c – Monday morning discussion session**

Question: You don't use one of these E.? Your shoulders are right down like that. It's really affecting your posture. (Faint reply) Maybe you should tie it to you. I think I saw that once. (Laughing) You need a mini-cushion. ☺ Your shoulders are down.

Question: How much do you move? When?

Linda: As soon as you realise you're slumping slightly – and a few people have been a bit – just gently straighten up. Maybe ten minutes later you might find yourself down like this again so persist. Just do it gently but straighten up because it keeps you much more alert; it does make that difference. If you're like this – a few people have their heads a bit like that – just straighten up a bit. Have your shoulders as straight as you can without being at attention. It does help with being a bit more alert energetically and in every way. It's better to be as straight as you can be. You sometimes don't even realise it – anyone one – not just you. So when you realise it, just gently straighten up. Make sure you don't arch your back, so you're not out like that. Keep your core in. It's often good to straighten up from the pelvis and make sure your shoulders are straight but if you haven't got this (lap cushion for you your hands/arms) you tend to go like that and that's how you were.

Question: Also, in the second sit yesterday there was a lot of tremoring and it started up in the second sit today. It crossed my mind that that's a discharge of energy. So I really tried to contain it when I felt it was coming on.

Linda: It might be. I suggest maybe you do it in between sits. Go into your room and do some there. Not a whole lot, but do some there. That might help. I saw you yesterday.

Question: Yes, yesterday it was quite bad.

Linda: Quite what?

Question: Quite strong.

Linda: Yes. (Laughing) You said "bad" didn't you. It's not bad. It's necessary at times. But I think, do a bit when you're not sitting like this.

Question: I missed you... Just on the tremoring bit, I have this question because I've been trembling quite a bit and I have really refined it and gone deeper into it. It's become really subtle. I can tremor anywhere: on the bus or the lounge area of my office and close my eyes. It's more like just vibrations in the body. So I've been wondering, especially about pain. And when I started this retreat I sat for three hours. And having learned this tremoring technique from F., my question is: is

pain something that is vibrating at a different frequency? Is it a block like a solid thing or does it have a being or motion or something different?

Linda: It does have a motion. It's not a block but it can feel like it, like a solid block. It is a resistance to the energy coming through. But as you said, it is vibrating at a much slower speed than the energy that you're starting to ingest when you're doing this. The trick is to look at it, to watch it; not to see it as something that shouldn't be there or in the way, because it's very necessary to regulate the flow of energy. If too much energy comes in at once, it's too much for you. So the resistance is a regulator and a safety valve – just as pain physically is an indication of something needs to be done – it's a safety thing really. It's the same when we're doing this. It's a different form of pain but you will feel it as physical pain in the body – it's not really strictly physical, but it manifests physically.

So it is moving, and when you look at it very closely you see that it can move from one part of the body to another and it's not this fixed state. And that's the fear – that the pain's never going to go away, it's going to stay here forever. But it doesn't, it moves around.

Question: I have been using tremoring. My tremoring is very subtle now, I'm not outwardly moving but I can feel it inside. My senses are a bit mixed up now but it's like sound, moving, vibrating, sparks. I've been using tremoring to ease off the pain during Saturday a bit. But today I didn't tremor when I was getting pain. I was like, "I can ease it off if I want. I don't have to pay that much attention." When the sensations are there I have to watch it, but I don't have to get worked up about it. So I was wondering if this is the right approach or if I'm getting too much into it (the tremoring)?

Linda: I don't know, I'm not all that experienced in the tremoring. I wasn't aware of it when I was going through my practice so I didn't use it. But I did use other things to try and regulate the pain at times and ease it off a bit. You have to see it's totally up to you how much you're prepared to put up with. If you feel it's a bit much and you feel like softening it a bit – moving like that probably will do that. You've got to realise it's really up to you how much you put up with. That's when you start to see that you do have limits and you go, "Yes, I'll do this much but not this much." And then you go, "Well, I did that much – what would it be like if I kept going?" That's the way I did it.

If you're really feeling too strung out by the whole thing, get up and have a break. And don't feel like it's always beneficial to sit for hours at a time. Sometimes it is and sometimes it isn't – it depends. And anything can become an attachment or habitual.

Question: In my practice, especially this week, I've been going with the basics of the basics, just the breath.

Linda: Yes, I would say keep it as basic and simple as possible. Don't feel like you've got to look for another way to do it, because this is just a very simple, basic approach. The mind is complicated enough and will try and undermine you at times by saying there's another way of doing this. There are things that you can do that complement the whole thing but basically, sitting hour after hour, day after day, in my experience, is the way. Other people will say otherwise, but of course I disagree. But it's why there are so few people doing it like this because, as you know, it's hard work. With some practices, people do try and make it a bit more palatable for the masses by using mainly talking and saying it's easy, and all that sort of stuff. But when it comes down to it, it's not easy.

Question: It's very confusing and annoying if you're trying too many other things.

Linda: Yes, I feel it's very confusing and it can really undermine the whole thing. When I was going through my practice I used to go and see a teacher sometimes who did do a lot of talking. He was into meditation too. I used to go just to feel energetically; it was good being around him. He was enlightened but I really didn't want him to be my teacher. And it did affect me, going, but I didn't go all that much and I didn't go to any long things. Subtly things like that can undermine your practice, your whole intention.

Question: About the movement away from here, from now – I've been watching that whenever I can. So you're in your anchor, you're here and then there is the movement, it takes you away and you're floating in your dreamland and then again, the movement to come back here. I've really slowed. The long sits have been helpful in slowing down. You said to me in Melbourne to not regret things because that's a waste of energy, so I'm not regretting when I'm floating away, but I'd like to go deeper to see the movement away from here and stay here more with my anchor. The slower I go and the slower I come back. Does mind not understand this language of being slow? Does it help to be here more?

Linda: As your consciousness quickens, which is what happens particularly with an intense, concentrated period like this during the retreat, the movement of thinking – and you've got to realise that you're the one moving, nothing is really taking you away, you're the one responsible for moving – appears to be slower but it's the same speed as it always was. It's just that your consciousness has quickened. So you start to see that it is possible to eventually catch the thinking before it even it starts. You feel this sensation that you realise is the beginning of a thought – just the beginning of that movement – and you bring yourself back.

Bringing the attention back to the body is pure intelligence, and pure intelligence is very, very fast. The mind has got no hope with the speed of pure intelligence. What we do with thinking, for most of our lives, it's like the mind has taken us over, it's the boss that's in control and we're the victim of the mind. This is taking back your power, and you start to see it. At first it feels impossible not to think, to be able to exist without thinking. It seems incredibly fast. You see it and it's going boom, boom, boom and you think, "How am I ever going to catch that?" Then you start to get a glimpse of the possibility of catching that thought, the thinking.

You'll have periods where you're sort of at the same speed and then other periods when you get faster. And the periods where you are faster take a lot of energy, even though it appears that things are going slowly it takes a lot of energy. So you can only sustain those periods of speed for short periods to start with and then those periods gradually become longer.

It doesn't mean that the mind always seems particularly slow, because when you're tired it will jump in and take over again for a while. Enlightenment is the point where the speed is so fast and so established that the mind can never really catch it again. It doesn't mean it's not there, and you have to still be very alert to it, but it just hasn't got that power anymore. And you see how pathetic the whole thing is and how it was all just a bluff.

Question: Yesterday when I was having my lunch and my mind was like, "Ah, carrot, zucchini." It's not required! (Laughter) I can feel or watch, I don't need to comment.

Linda: But the mind will keep trying. And it's such a deeply ingrained habit that you can never assume that it's gone. You can never underestimate it because it's so devious and so deeply ingrained in our body and psyche that it does take a lot of determination and effort to become free from it. But when you start to see that it is possible, that's the exciting bit. And not just possible in someone else saying, "It's great being enlightened, blah, blah." But it's possible in you, in your body. That's when it gives you that, "Oh my god! Maybe this is possible."

Question: This is exciting itself just being here, and to have that capability.

Linda: And also – not everyone feels this but – I feel this is part of your enlightenment. People love hearing the stories of someone waking up overnight or they look at something and suddenly they're enlightened. But what good are they going to do to others if they say that's what happens, and it's luck – it's not luck at all.

And someday you might be sitting somewhere teaching, saying exactly what I'm saying to someone, because you have experienced it yourself and you understand how you came to be in this state. That is a huge part of this state – understanding how you got here and then explaining that to others and helping them practice and also understand. So this is a huge part of it, using your intelligence and realising – not just understanding – how you got to this state.

Question: During the last sit I had a quite an intense – a lot of energy coming through me. I was watching my breath as much as I could, but at some point I realised I was not as grounded as I felt I needed to be in that situation. Something in me said to stop. So I continued with the meditation through to the break and then stopped and got up and walked. Is that an intelligent thing to do? Because usually I just keep on pushing and going and going, but at this point I felt I was losing my mind, but not in a good way. I felt I was losing my senses – I don't know how. Something was changing and it wasn't good. Should I trust that or just keep on going?

Linda: What was happening? When you said you stopped, what did you do then?

Question: I just got up and walked and did the circuit.

Linda: When you sat down again, how did you feel?

Question: Changed – I felt very changed. I felt very light and not scared. But I felt very scared in the previous part of the sit. It just took forever; I thought the session was never going to end.

Linda: So yes, I feel it was the right thing to get up and walk and trust your intuition. If you feel it's really your intuition, do that – take notice of it. Sometimes it's a fine line and you really don't know what it is. But if you're really feeling unstable, get up and do the walking. And really do the counting when you're feeling that scared.

Question: Yes, it was great that you mentioned the counting after the tea break because that's the point I realised that I was getting unstable or destabilised. That's when I thought, "This isn't normal," whatever normal means. At home, I've continued my practice, just doing pretty much the same thing. The last period I haven't felt to do so many long sits. I do them occasionally. I still continue to do the regular sits in the morning and evening. Should I just continue with that again?

Linda: Yes, and continue when you're not actually sitting, being very aware of what you're doing. And if you feel to, sometimes just do an extra short sit – a half-hour sit – during the day, unplanned.

Question: Spontaneous! (Laughing)

Question: I think my question is about trust but it can also be a comment as well. I was quite affected and touched when L. shared his vulnerability last night. Even in the tea break I felt everybody's vulnerability, mine especially. Then, especially this morning, a lot of vulnerability came up about wanting things to be different in my life. Staying with the intensity was something that made me trust the practice and trust you more. I thought I had trust in the practice but I realise now that it was sort of superficial trust because it was a tumbling around in heat and sweat this morning. But then I could still feel the breath. I wasn't able to count in those moment but I could really feel the pressure or foundation of the breath. I didn't know trust expanded.

Linda: It deepens. It just keeps deepening. And I think it's something that you really need to practice – being vulnerable. Maybe not being quite so efficient, which you're used to doing in your life – and now needing to look after someone – you have to be able to be looked after as well and sometimes go, "No, I'm feeling too vulnerable. I have to just let go for a while."

Question: It's shows me the importance of everyone saying what's in their heart.

Linda: So allow yourself.

Question: The question I have is about open eyes and closed eyes because my teacher M. taught me open-eye Zazen. So I've been going back and forth between open eyes and closed eyes. Something P. said reminded me of the value of open-eye meditation so I wanted to hear your thoughts on whether you used open-eyes in your meditation practice and whether you found it helpful. I noticed that when I had my eyes open there was less of a difference between during the session and when I got up to walk. It was almost seamless and very quiet, but I couldn't maintain that for long because it took a lot of energy. Then when I would close my eyes after that the energy was getting too much. Then I would dip into this not-really-sleep.

Linda: When you've got your eyes open you seem to be looking like this, rather than down? Is that right?

Question: It's downcast but my eyes are pretty much all open.

Linda: I know in Zen usually your eyes are two-thirds to three-quarters closed, just looking down. I wasn't initially trained in that way. My first teacher was Vipassana so I just have my eyes closed. So I haven't got much experience in that. When I was in the monastery I asked Roshi Sama about it and he said it's fine to close your eyes – whatever you're used to doing. So it's up to you. I wouldn't alternate a whole lot during the sit. Choose what you're going to do and stick to that. I can see advantages in both but whatever you feel to do, do it. I haven't got a whole lot experience. I've only done it a few times with my eyes slightly open. I like just closing them, I like doing that. I think you've got them open a bit too far so I'd say close them a bit more. That's a bit trickier actually. So I'd say, have them mostly closed and just a little slit at the bottom.

Question: Yes, that might be a happy medium.

Question: I'm wondering about the breath in the abdomen. I was experimenting a bit with discharging pain by taking a bit of a deeper breath in, and that sometimes works. Is there any reason that in this practice the focus is on the abdomen? I'm used to yoga practices associated with chakras and dynamism, etc. Is there any time at which you would change the focus to anywhere else? I'm guessing it's because there's the movement at the abdomen that's slower with the breath.

Linda: I never say "focus" on it. I never use that word, focus. The main attention goes there and that is your anchor. That's very different to having something as a focus. If you focus on something you're excluding other things that are happening. It's not to try and push anything away or exclude anything, but just to keep you quite stable. The abdomen down here is deep in the body. It's not up here. If you put your attention up here for too long you can get quite spacey. It can feel quite nice, it can feel ecstatic at times, but you're not really grounded deeply in your body, whereas this is deep in your body.

When you feel emotional you often feel it down here, so it's a really good place to breathe and to put your attention. When you see people, a lot of people are just breathing up here, they're not breathing deeply down here. There's quite a bit of resistance to doing that because you do start to feel some disturbance and discomfort down there. And it's also a very tangible place to feel your breath – there is that movement of the abdomen while you're breathing. You look at babies and you see their abdomen going – quite violently sometimes – up and down. Then as we get older we come further up here towards our head. So it's a place where a lot of people are scared to go because they do feel fear down there – anxiety. And sometimes when you're sitting you can feel quite nauseous down there.

Question: That's exactly how I was feeling yesterday.

Linda: I'd say if you do feel nauseous there, rather than do the habitual thing, which is to try and get away and try and stop it, breathe even more deeply into it. Because it's a bluff – the whole thing is a bluff. It can feel very, very real, particularly when you feel nauseous, but if you challenge it and say, "Okay, I'm going to breathe into it and see what happens," it will usually dissipate and go away.

So you're going to feel other sensations in your body: tension, pain, maybe pleasure sometimes – feel them but use the breath down here just to anchor you and to keep you quite stable. But, especially if there's a dominant sensation, there's no way you can try to push it away or ignore it. With the pain, don't try and disperse it. The breath is more to be able to put up with it and bear it. The same with the pain as with the nausea, if there's really intense pain, rather than try and push it away and get away from it, get a bit closer to it and see what happens. Often you'll see it will change, it will move to another part of your body. Sometimes you can follow it around and it's going boom, boom, boom around your body. But what this will do down here is keep you a little bit more stable. And the same with the counting – that can help to keep you more stable as well.

Question: I got to the point that I thought I was going to be sick. I remember we had a similar conversation last time. (Laughing) So I do say to myself, "You know this is fear talking," and it does work to a degree.

Linda: If you start to feel cold and clammy put your head down because occasionally people do faint. Just try that breathing into it, challenge it without fighting it, and go into it. It can feel very, very real.